



© John A. DiGiorgio, Photographer

W I N T E R BALD EAGLE WATCHING

Winter, and as lakes and rivers freeze over in northern portions of the US and Canada, bald eagles migrate southward to areas in search of open water, fresh and abundant fish and undisturbed habitat. Flourishing across the nation, your chances of seeing a wild bald eagle is no longer slim. With proper technique and planning, “winter” eagle-watching has become a popular off-season activity.

Great Places to see Bald Eagles at the Nat’l Wildlife Refuges

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (Cambridge, Maryland) - winters over 200 bald eagles annually, and supports the largest nesting population of bald eagles north of Florida on the Atlantic Coast.

Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge (Crystal River, Florida) - from Oct through Apr., many bald eagles winter and nest on the banks of the Chassahowitzka River.

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge (Missouri Valley, Iowa) - an important wintering area for up to 120 bald eagles.

Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge (Basom, New York) - Named for the Iroquois Indians, eagle watching is among the refuge’s most popular activities.

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Soldotna, AK) - with a statewide population of between 50,000 and 70,000 bald eagles, much of Alaska is eagle country.

Klamath Basin Refuge (California-Oregon border) - hosts the largest concentration of wintering bald eagles in the Lower 48.

Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge (Woodbridge, Virginia) – 18 miles south of Washington, DC along the banks of the Potomac River, lies an 8000 acre peninsula, the home of the 1st refuge established for the protection of bald eagles.

Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge (Union City, Tennessee) hosts between 150 and 200 bald eagles from Dec through mid-Jan, as the birds take advantage of the thousands of ducks and geese wintering on the 15,000-acre Reelfoot Lake.

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (Ridgefield, Washington) Ridgefield is home to 4 nesting pair of bald eagles, but dozens more drop by in the winter, feeding on waterfowl and fish from the nearby Columbia River.

Patuxent Research Refuge (Laurel, Maryland) - is the nation’s only refuge established to support wildlife research.

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge (Zimmerman, Minnesota) is a good spot for eagle viewing due to an extensive network of shallow lakes that freeze and grow short of oxygen in the winter. The result is a seasonal fish kill that provides easy feeding in the spring, when groups of bald eagles gather.

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge (Mound City, Missouri) – 200 to 300 bald eagles gather in Nov and Dec, when the waterfowl population peaks.

<https://www.fws.gov/refuges/whm/viewBaldEagles.html>

Other Great Places to See Bald Eagles

New York’s Upper Delaware River and Hudson River - provide abundant opportunities to see resident and “wintering” bald eagles less than a 2-hour drive from midtown Manhattan. Depending on weather conditions, wintering bald eagles begin arriving in mid-Dec and remain till mid-Mar.

<https://www.nps.gov/upde/learn/nature/baldeagles.htm>

<http://delawarehighlands.org/eagles/eaglewatching/map>

Oklahoma’s River and Reservoirs - host large numbers of bald eagles each winter.

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/okbald/winter.htm>

Quabbin Reservoir - in Massachusetts is one of the northeast’s best-known winter eagle lookouts. Bald eagles were introduced there in the 1980s. Today, year-round resident eagles are joined by dozens more in winter, with numbers peaking in Feb. **Visitor Center at (413) 323-7221.**

Upper Skagit River Watershed - in Northwest Washington draws hundreds of eagles to dead and dying salmon at the end of the spawning season. Eagle numbers peak in late Dec and early Jan. www.skagiteagle.org.

Upper Mississippi River - is jam-packed with bald eagles in winter, and some of the best views are available below the locks and dams. www.cassville.org/nelsondewey.html.

Wolf Lodge Bay - Lake Coeur d’Alene, Idaho is frequented by wintering bald eagles when the kokanee salmon start to spawn.

<http://www.sandpoint.com/lifestyle/fall06/baldeagles.asp>.



© John A. DiGiorgio, Photographer

The Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), removed from the Endangered Species List in 2007, continues to be protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.